

Title: Opt-Out Prenatal HIV Testing (Pilot Program)

Organization: Department of Human Resources, Division of Public Health,
Prevention Services Branch, HIV Section, Atlanta, GA

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Topical Issues of Focus: Successful collaborations between programs to prevent perinatal HIV, using CDC funding to build on existing HIV programs

Background/Objective

To increase the number of pregnant women who will consent for HIV testing at a specific entry point (pregnancy testing) within the DeKalb district health system by adopting an opt-out prenatal HIV testing approach.

Since receiving the CDC prenatal HIV prevention grant, Georgia's ability to ascertain a baseline state HIV testing rate during pregnancy has been affected by its lack of HIV reporting. According to the November 2003 MMWR article, "*HIV Testing Among Pregnant Women United States & Canada 1998-2001*", a chart review revealed that Georgia has a 66% HIV testing rate among pregnant women utilizing opt-in prenatal testing. Given this low HIV testing rate using an opt-in approach, a perinatal HIV prevention work group, including representatives from maternal-child epidemiology, women's health, AIDS surveillance, HIV/AIDS prevention services, and perinatal HIV disciplines has been established to develop statewide strategies to: 1) increase the number of pregnant women receiving HIV tests, 2) adopt an opt-out approach for prenatal HIV testing, and 3) achieve 0.0–2.0 % perinatal HIV transmission rate.

Methods

The perinatal HIV prevention work group has identified the following preliminary action steps to achieve a statewide-integrated perinatal HIV prevention and care system:

- Engage the support of Georgia's twelve regional Perinatal Centers' directors;
- Implement HIV reporting in Georgia;
- Develop standard of care related to opt-out prenatal HIV testing;
- Engage the support of the state's eight regional perinatal planners;
- Engage the support of the governor's maternal and infant council;
- Engage the support of obstetricians, family practitioners and pediatricians;
- Identify centers of excellence or systems of care for women identified as HIV positive during pregnancy to support local obstetricians in management;
- Identify ongoing systems of support for mother and infant after birth

The state's perinatal health system is integral to implementing a statewide perinatal HIV prevention and care system. Perinatal care in Georgia is arranged around community-based regions that relate to six perinatal centers throughout the state. The division of Public Health's Family Health branch has hired perinatal planners for each of the six areas, who work with public and private community stakeholders to ensure that each

region has a health care system of risk appropriate care for reproductive-age women, pregnant women and infants.

A key strategy in achieving a 0.0–2.0 % perinatal HIV transmission rate in Georgia is the adoption of a statewide opt-out approach. Initially, the perinatal HIV prevention group will garner support of key stakeholders, the state's six regional Perinatal Center health directors, in implementing a statewide opt-out approach in the public and private sectors. With the support of the regional Perinatal Center health directors, perinatal HIV prevention grand round presentations will be offered to staff in the perinatal regional hospitals and large birthing hospitals in which prenatal opt-out HIV testing will be promoted. With the support of the regional perinatal planners, one-on-one professional lunch and learn presentations will be conducted for private obstetricians and staff in their offices. Additional strategies for achieving a 0.0–2.0 % perinatal HIV transmission rate will include: 1) providing current HAART recommendations during pregnancy to physicians, certified nurse midwives, and advanced practice nurses who provide prenatal care within Georgia's regional Perinatal Centers and their respective networks, and 2) linking pregnant HIV positive women to appropriate medical care and treatment services throughout the state.

The Georgia perinatal HIV prevention project will also partner with DeKalb health district, which has the second highest AIDS prevalence in the state, to pilot a program that utilizes an opt-out approach for all women who request a pregnancy test and the test result is positive. All women who have a positive pregnancy test result through the DeKalb health district will be automatically referred to a perinatal HIV coordinator for HIV counseling and testing utilizing an opt-out approach. A rapid HIV test will be used to facilitate early notification of HIV status. If it is determined that a client's HIV test result is positive, appropriate referrals, linkages and follow-up will be made. Appropriate posttest counseling will be conducted for clients identified as HIV negative. In addition, the perinatal HIV coordinator will compile the following data:

- Number of clients requesting a pregnancy test
- Number of clients who have a positive pregnancy test result
- Number of clients who have a positive pregnancy test result and are referred for HIV counseling and testing
- Number of clients who have a negative pregnancy test result
- Number of clients who have a negative pregnancy test result and receive HIV prevention information
- Number of clients who refuse HIV testing
- Reasons for declining HIV testing
- Number of HIV negative test results
- Number of HIV positive test results
- Number of HIV referrals
- Types of referrals
- Number of clients maintained in HIV care within one week of referral
- Number of clients maintained in HIV care within one month of referral
- Number of clients maintained in HIV care within two months of referral

- Number of clients maintained in HIV care within three months of referral

Results

By making HIV counseling and testing a routine standard of care for all pregnant women and adopting an opt-out approach, the project's goal is to increase the percentage of pregnant women consenting to HIV testing in the DeKalb health system to 80%.

Conclusions

Based on the success of the DeKalb health district pilot program, as evidenced by an increased percentage of clients consenting to HIV counseling and testing, the Georgia perinatal HIV prevention project will work to facilitate implementation of the opt-out testing approach in the state's remaining 18 health districts.